Farewells

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Summary: "Does Natsu really intend to face off against Zeref alone?" Gray knew the answer to that question, there was no denying Natsu that reckless plan, but there was no way that Gray was going to let him face Zeref alone. Even if Natsu wanted to.

Farewells

This little piece of slightly angsty Gratsu fanfic was inspired by chapter 463 of the Fairy Tail manga and a theory I subsequently read :) I have built my own theory's on too :)

So spoilers for those who don't read the Manga!

Enjoy! :)

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><p>"Does Natsu really intend to face off against Zeref alone?" Someone yelled over the babble of voices that had grown in volume since the realisation that Natsu and Happy weren't in the guild hall. The chatter continued as the group decided what to do about the battle strategy.<p>

The noise suddenly subsided as Gray's voice rose above din, "You serious!? We're talking about Zeref here! He has the book of E.N.D. with him y' know!"

"Natsu said he's got a secret technique to defeat Zeref," Erza responded calmly, "soâ€¦he'll be alright." She turned back to Mavis and Mira but stopped wen Gray spoke again, he was louder this time, angry.

"You've got too much faith in him Erza!"

Dead silence settled over the guild.

"So you're telling me, you don't believe in him?" Erza growled back.

The pair were glaring at each other when Lucy finally pulled them apart. "Okay, okay! Stop this alreadyâ€¦"

"What do we do nowâ€¦?" Mira asked Mavis tentatively.

"Well, let's place our hopes in Natsu then." Mavis replied decisively, "his moves might seem reckless, but I'm sure there's a reason behind them. We're cornered from all sidesâ€¦he must've thought that was the fasted way to end it all was to take the enemy's leader down, and I must agree, that is the most affective wayâ€¦" Mavis trailed off, then turned to Gray who was looking very conflicted, his brows furrowed and fists clenched. "Let's just believe in him, shall we, Gray?"

Gray swallowed thickly, "yeah well it's not like I don'tâ€¦" Gray paused, _of course I do, I always have, but I don't trust him right now. That bandage. _"It's justâ€¦y'knowâ€¦him going out there all aloneâ€¦and stuffâ€¦" _Damnit Gray! Get it together!_

"Gray's worried for Natsuâ€¦" Juvia whispered thoughtfully, her eyes widening in shock.

Gray whipped around as he heard Carla's voice behind him.

"Well he's not really alone is he? Happy's there with himâ€¦am I right?"

Carla's encouraging smile should have helped to ease the gut feeling Gray had that something very bad was going to happen, _whatever Natsu is planning is probably dangerous, no question about that. Plus it has something to do with that bandage. Whatever Natsu has under there he can only loose once. Once._ "Oh noâ€¦" Gray muttered as panic flooded his chest, _what if?_ "I'm sorry! There's no time to explain!" Gray yelled out frantically, "I've just thought of something, I need to stop him!"

"Wait what?" Mira cried out, she'd been startled by Gray's sudden outbreak.

"There is no time to explain!" Gray repeated, "If I'm right, and I am certain I am! I need to stop him from doing something very very stupid!" _Like he did for me._

"This is Natsu!" Lucy exclaimed, "of course what he's doing is stupid and reckless!"

"This is worse." _If I don't stop him now he may never come back. _"Where's Mest?"

"Gray!" Mira tried to reason with him.

"Where is Mest?" Gray said forcefully.

"Hereâ€¦" Mest heard the commotion earlier, and he'd had a feeling Gray would ask. "Where do you need to go?"

Gray offered a thankful smile, "The edge of Zeref's operations, Natsu will be there. He would have wanted to draw Zeref out."

Mest held out an arm for Gray to take.

"Gray wait!" Erza and Lucy cried out in unison.

"There's no time!" Gray spoke urgently.

"What do you think he's doing? Gray we need to know!"

Gray searched frantically for a way to explain his gut feeling, but as it was only based on a memory he felt had no way to tell them. He put a hand on Mest's arm and felt an invisible force tug him backwards.

"Gray! Damnit!" Erza yelled.

"What's got into him?" Lucy muttered, _he even stood up to Erza._

"Nothing," Erza replied with a knowing smile, "it's been like that for a while, more than a whileâ€¦"

"What do you mean?" Wendy asked.

"You didn't notice?" Erza grinned, "Gray cares more than he lets on, he _really_ cares." She raised her eyebrows suggestively.

There was a collective 'ohhhâ€¦' from the group before Wendy asked what they were all thinking.

"â€¦but Natsu?"

"He has no ideaâ€¦and Gray won't say a word."

"They're always fighting though!" Lucy laughed, "there is no way he feels that way about Natsu! How?"

"No clue, but I think he doesn't want Natsu to know, so the fighting covers it. Or it's his way of showing he cares. Getting Natsu's attention, training with him, laughing with him, and fighting again."

Mavis smiled, "of course he cares."

"You knew!?" Lucy and Wendy cried out in unison.

"Their magic melds together beautifully, I could sense it, fire and iceâ€¦" she trailed off, "â€¦they complement each other like nothing else. I have faith in them. They'll be fine."

Gray doubled over as he and Mest landed on the outskirts of a large clearing, a clearing that Gray knew for sure had been made by Natsu's flames. _Roar of the Fire Dragon thenâ€¦you must have wiped out quite a few before Zeref showed. _"Thanks Mest, are you right to get back?"

"In a minute, but just go! Stop Natsu!" Mest wheezed, he had

misinterpreted the distance he'd need to take Gray.

With a nod Gray ran towards where Natsu stood facing Zeref, a light breeze blew through, buffeting their clothes and hair, he kept his distance bur Gray noticed as Natsu clenched his fist that he knew Gray was there. As he got closer Gray could hear Zeref's smooth, quiet voice.

"â€¦I wanted to see you as soon as possible, Natsu." Zeref was unmoving as he spoke, still as a statue he stared expectantly at Natsu.

"Heh?" Natsu sounded a little confused, and ignoring Gray he carried on, "but we've gotta say our farewells really soon, Zeref."

"Is that so?" Zeref smiled sadly, "I thought we could at least catch up, _brother_â€¦"

The word hung in the air almost tauntingly.

"What?" Natsu voiced Gray's thoughts.

"Your friend could join us too."

"You said brother? Youâ€¦you're not?" Natsu choked out.

"Zeref Dragneel." He stated, "A surprise, I am sure, but you will understand, you are the reason I am like this, and you will be the reason this stops as well."

"What do you mean?" Gray spoke up, he was standing next to Natsu who was part of the way through unwrapping the bandage from his arm, but had paused. Gray didn't notice himself edge forward slightly so that he was slightly in front of Natsu.

"You died, Natsu, and I brought you back."

"You what?" Gray and Natsu replied in unison.

"E. N. D."

"No." Gray whispered, staring open mouthed at Natsu, _he can't beâ€¦_

"Etherious Natsu Dragneel, I have you right where I need you."

"You _bastard_!" Gray yelled charging forward, his fist hitting his palm, he knew he had to do something, shoot anything at Zeref. He was about to speak but he felt a firm hand on his shoulder.

Natsu seemed to stare at him like he was seeing a ghost, "you need to go, Gray." He spoke quietly, pleadingly, as if he'd only just registered that he was there. "Happy will take you."

"No! I'm not leaving you here! I know what is under that bandage. You saved me once from doing the exact same stupid thing that you're about to do. I'm here to do the same."

"How'd you know?" Natsu asked, shame and hurt settling in his gut as he stared at Gray's betrayed expression.

"Your secret technique, you said you can only use it once," Gray murmured, _I can't let you die, _"plus you left without telling anyone. You knew we'd stop youâ€¦"

"Of course I knew you'd stop me!" Natsu retorted, "that's why I left. I left before this got more difficult than it already was."

"Of course _I_ would stop you! This is madness! You won't be able to come back from that, if it is anything like Iced-Shell you'll be gone!" Gray yelled, he tried to keep the panic out of his voice. _He can't know._

"Gray! Especially after what Zeref just said it's for the best!"

"The best? The _best_!" Gray put both his hands on Natsu's shoulders staring him in the eyes, "how can any option where you die be the '_best_' option!"

"Two birds with one stoâ€“"

Gray cut him off, completely forgetting Zeref was standing right there in front of them, he crashed his lips roughly to Natsu's. He lingered there, putting a thousand unsaid words into that one kiss. "You're not going anywhere," he whispered against Natsu's warm mouth.

"Grayâ€¦" Natsu stared open mouthed, _did he just kiss me?_

Abandoning the voice of reason screaming in his mind for him to stop speaking right that second Gray continued on. "I need you to know why you can't continue with this plan. There are too many people who care about you for you to make a sacrifice like this! Remember what you told me when I was standing in the same position as you?"

"How's dying going to settle it? Because it sounds like you're running away to me." Natsu trailed off.

"Exactly."

"â€¦and that I didn't want you to die. Not like that."

"Well, I don't want you to die either!" Gray stared defiantly at Natsu, hoping, praying that it would be enough to stop him.

"Iâ€¦I'm sorry, I have toâ€¦" Natsu couldn't look Gray in the eye, "I have to do this!"

Gray closed his eyes, "I said you're not going anywhereâ€¦"

"Gray! Don't make this harder than it already is!" Natsu pleaded.

"Let me rephrase that. You are not going anywhere _without_ _me_."

'No! I can't!" Natsu fumbled over his words, he took a quick glance at Zeref who seemed to be watching the scene with curious rapture. "I

am not taking you with me!"

"Yes, you are." Gray took a decisive step forward, standing squarely in front of Natsu with his back to him, thankful he couldn't see the pain in his eyes, he shook his head stubbornly as he felt tears threatening to break loose. "If you won't stop then I'm coming with you. I care for you too much, and have cared for too long to stop now."

"Damnit Gray! Move!" Natsu yelled.

"Do what you will, but I'm not moving wither way."

"I can't kill you â€¦I just can't!"

There was a long pause; Zeref stared at the two without comment. In truth, he didn't want his own death to come at the cost of the life of his only brother. He agreed with Gray, but he said nothing as tears flooded his face at the scene before him. Gray's protective stance, Natsu's panicked expression. This was humanity at its finest. Fighting for the one you love no matter the cost.

"Then don't."

"How?"

"Simple. We'll do it like we always have. By beating the enemy and _surviving_. Together."

Finally, Natsu nodded, "fine, but you buy me a drink when we're done here." Natsu grinned.

Gray gave a short laugh, "hellâ€¦ I'll buy you dinner!"

* * *

><p>This was originally going to end much darker but I noped out at the last minute and changed it, so I gave you hope instead :) I have however since I originally posted this on tumblr written the darker version which I may post later<p>

End
file.